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TAGS: [SNAR](#) [KCRM](#) [PREL](#) [KFIN](#) [JM](#)
SUBJECT: JAMAICA: MINISTER OF NATIONAL SECURITY CONCERNED
ABOUT POLITICAL VIOLENCE. BELIEVES FUTURE STABILITY OF
COUNTRY THREATENED IF CORRUPTION NOT TACKLED.

REF: A. 2006 KINGSTON 2151
[1](#)B. KINSTON 69 SECSTATE 49116

Classified By: Ambassador Brenda L. Johnson for reasons 1.5 (B&D)

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: On Friday, April 20, Charge and NAS
Director, along with the British and Canadian COMs, met with
Peter Phillips, Minister of National Security at his request.
In this session, one of an ongoing series of conversations
with his international partners, (Reftels A and B) Phillips
outlined a four-part plan for the Ministry's next few months
and expressed his concerns over political violence and the
need to act against the dons of organized crime gangs and to
fight high-level corruption that plagues the Jamaica
Constabulary Force. Phillips seemed pensive and was clearly
worried that Jamaica continues to slide into a morass of
guns, violence and criminality which has the potential to
topple its fragile institutions. Phillips promised to again
try to move the U.S./CARICOM Light-Arms Declaration through
the CARICOM Secretariat. Phillips asked the COMs present to
lobby the country's political leadership to quell
election-related violence. End Summary

[1](#)2. (C) Minister Phillips appeared quite somber in the meeting
as he outlined his goals for the immediate future and some
more long-term strategies. It is his intention to use his
limited time before the next election focusing on the
following: 1) The implementation of the Proceeds of Crime
Act before the end of May (the law was passed in February by
Parliament; 2) Passage of the legislation to create a new
National Investigative and Intelligence Agency, and 3) the
hiring of the new internationally-recruited head of the
Jamaica Constabulary Force's Anti-Corruption Division. Given
the acerbic nature of political discourse, and the fact that
Jamaica is awash in weapons, Phillips was clearly worried
about the likelihood of increased political violence leading
up to the next election, which seems likely in late June
early July.

[1](#)3. (C) Despite the multi-lateral forum, the Charge took the
opportunity to raise the need for Jamaica to show leadership
in CARICOM and move the Light-Arms Declaration through the
CARICOM Secretariat. Phillips seemed surprised that this
hadn't yet been done by CARICOM and promised to do what he
could. (Note: Charge also raised this the previous day with
Ministry of Foreign Affairs Permanent Secretary Saunders,

see, Septel.)

¶4. (C) Assuming the next election returns the ruling PNP to power, and assuming further that Peter Phillips remains at the helm of the Ministry, it is Phillips' intention to focus the Ministry's efforts on the following four key initiatives: 1) a re-energizing of Operation Kingfish to attack certain "untouchable" organized crime figures; 2) the undertaking of a strategic reform of the Jamaica Constabulary Force in an effort to stamp out pervasive and high level corruption; 3) the launching of a broader Anti-Corruption Initiative and 4) the institution of social intervention programs as part of the Government of Jamaica's broader crime-prevention efforts.

¶5. (C) The U.S., UK and Canadian COMs expressed support for Phillips, and urged him to accomplish his short-term goals. The UK and Canadian COMs cautioned Phillips that the GOJ has to do more to show its political will to stamp out organized crime and corruption if it expects continued support from their governments. For example, if the NIIA is created, it must be adequately staffed. (Note: Jamaica has the tendency to create new governmental bodies, often in response to international pressure, but then fails to adequately provide for them financially, examples include the Anti-Corruption Commission, the Police Civilian Oversight Commission.) The COMs commented that in addition, if the Anti-Corruption Officer position is filled, he must have support to do what Phillips admitted is the "dirtiest job on the force." The Charge expressed concern that Jamaica's ability to carry forward on Phillips' plans, particularly the reform of the JCF and creation of anti-crime social programs, will be heavily constrained by its poor fiscal state. Phillips did not have an answer for how Jamaica will come up with the funding it needs for example, to pay its police force a living wage. Note: \$.70 cents of every dollar of revenue received by the GOJ is used to service the interest on government debt and pay current expenditures such as civil service payroll.

¶6. (C) The Charge also stressed the need for the political

parties to coalesce around certain overarching principals such as the need to support the rule of law, the fight against official corruption and the need to combat crime and violence so that whomever is the victor in the next election can work across party lines to effectively govern the country. Phillips acknowledged that Jamaica's history of political violence, the near universal distrust of the Jamaica Constabulary Force by the general public, an ever increasing tendency to vigilantism and the fact that the island is awash in guns has created an environment where the legitimacy of the state is in question. As an example, Phillips discussed the April 17 violence in two West Kingston's neighborhoods, Denham Town and Tivoli Gardens.

¶7. (SBU) On April 17, in Denham Town, the police confronted a small number of men armed with AK47s and the ensuing gunfight, which was joined by other heavily armed members of the gang quickly deteriorated into a wild west style shoot out. The police out-gunned called for and received back up from the Jamaica Defense Force, which dispatched soldiers to cordon off the volatile neighborhoods to prevent the violence from spreading. On the same day, because of the draw down of police from neighboring communities to provide assistance in Denham Town, in Tivoli, a festering gang war re-erupted, which lead to more violent clashes with police as they moved back in to quell the gangs.

¶8. (C) In Phillips view, the April 17 violence was related to an ongoing series of clashes between heavily armed criminal gangs in these neighborhoods and was not politically motivated. He noted however that in these "garrison" neighborhoods, where the criminal gangs have links to the opposition JLP party, and where there have been political killings and politically motivated police intimidation in the past, any police action, no matter how legitimate is

automatically suspect. Indeed the population often complains and questions the police motivation for "bothering" the local gang members. Phillips stated that the tension due to these violent incidences is so thick and there is so much suspicion between the ruling PNP and JLP that he delayed speaking about the implemetation of the Proceeds of Crime Act and the NIIA legislation in Parliment on April 17 because he thought it would lead the opposition JLP to launch into complaints regarding the police actions in Tivoli Gardens.

¶9. (C) Citing the effectiveness of similar messaging in the past, Phillips asked the COMs to deliver a strong message that the ability of the U.S., UK, Canada to work with the next government would greatly depend on the current political leaders willingness to tamp down violent tendencies among their supporters.

¶10. (C) Comment: Throughout the meeting Phillips seemed quite preoccupied and somber when addressing Jamaica's future. He is clearly worried about violence prior to the election and the ability of Jamaica to continue as a nation if tackling crime and violence at every level of society is not the focus of the next government. Phillips has been one of our most effective partners and there are no obivous alternative candidates within the PNP who share both Phillips dedication and orientation to the U.S. and its close allies. If the ruling PNP party does retain power in the next election, it will be important to work with our international partners to urge that Phillips is retained. End Comment
Johnson